

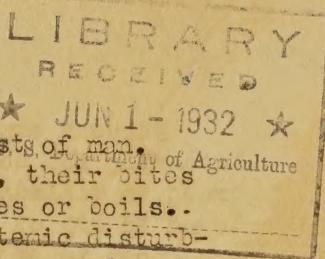
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY

RED BUGS, OR CHIGGERS, AND THEIR CONTROL.



Chiggers are an extremely annoying and often serious pests of man, ^{and} of Agriculture. While they have not been shown to carry any specific disease, their bites often induce secondary infection resulting in persistent sores or boils. Gross infestations not infrequently cause loss of sleep, systemic disturbances, and fever. Chiggers are also important pests of chickens and turkeys, frequently causing the death of chicks or poult.

A chigger is the first, or larval stage, of a large red velvet mite which is entirely harmless when mature. The chiggers hatch soon after warm weather begins, from eggs which are laid in the ground the previous fall. The time of appearance depends, of course, upon the latitude and other conditions. In the extreme south they often begin to cause annoyance about May 1st, while in the more northern sections they seldom appear before the middle of June.

It is a common belief that chiggers actually burrow into the skin, but this is erroneous, as they merely attach to the skin and suck blood. It seems that the chigger, even though of very minute size, is capable of injecting a large quantity of poisonous material into its host, and this is responsible for the persistent itching caused by its bite.

Normally, chiggers feed upon small animals, including snakes and lizards, and may even attack birds.

It does not seem possible to destroy chiggers in tracts which are heavily covered with woods and undergrowth, but preliminary information obtained by the Bureau of Entomology indicates that they can be held in check about habitations and camps by clearing the underbrush, vines, etc., from such tracts keeping the grass closely cut, and applying flowers of sulphur or very fine dusting sulphur to the vegetation and grounds, preferably with a dust gun. It appears that the use of about 1 pound of sulphur to 1,000 square feet is sufficient. Sometimes one treatment will give a high degree of control, but it is usually best to repeat the application two or three times at intervals of one to two weeks. This is especially necessary when the applications are followed by rain.

To avoid losses among poultry, hatch early. If chickens or turkeys are hatched late they should be kept out of high grass and brush. The use of sulphur in the manner described above will give them some protection, but where the young are brooded by a hen and given free range they will become infested. On chickens the chiggers are inclined to attach in dense masses on portions of the body less covered by down or feathers. A light dusting of the chicks with sulphur will give them some relief. However, avoidance of infestation is the most satisfactory practice.

No method which is entirely satisfactory has been found for protecting the person from chiggers. When people are going into places where chiggers abound it is advisable to wear leather leggings or, better, high-top shoes over the trousers. Dusting the body and underwear with flowers of sulphur will give a high degree of protection from attack. A light application of kerosene to the outer clothing is also a good preventive.

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Persons exposed to chiggers should bathe as promptly as possible, lathering the body freely with medicated soap and using a coarse rag or brush to dislodge the chiggers as much as possible. The lather may be allowed to dry on the body for 15 minutes before it is removed. When chiggers are known to be on the body a very light application of kerosene a few minutes prior to the bath will kill the chiggers. All clothing should be changed.

No. sovereign remedy for the bites is known. Ammonia water, strong salt water, soda water, cooling ointments, and many other treatments have their advocates. Scratching should be avoided and mercurochrome or iodine may be applied to infected bites.

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